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HE WĀHINE, HE TAPU

THE SANCTITY OF WOMEN

An exhibition report presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Māori Visual Arts
at Massey University
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New Zealand

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ABSTRACT:

This report contextualises the exhibition, *He Wāhine, He Tapu*. My research into puhi (chief's daughter) and mana wāhine (women of status), along with the methodology and practice which produced this exhibition is discussed. The literature review covers the status of Puhi and other female leaders in traditional Māori society, in particular, the sacredness of the whare tangata (house of humankind, or womb), linking wāhine (Māori women) to the atua wāhine (goddesses) of Māori creation stories. This body of work explores notions of tapu (sacred or restricted) and noa (normal or free from restriction), identity, the complementary nature of the sexes in traditional society and the impact of colonisation. The underpinning questions are; who is the puhi? What role did she play? What makes her special? And where is she today?

The review of artists examines the history of portraiture and early photography, particularly that of Māori, as well as links to contemporary artists working in this genre.

I have used Manawa Kāi Tahu, a cultural, social, environmental and economical framework as a tool for the analytical component, grounding this practice in Māori philosophy, values and tikanga (protocol), and locating this work as culturally relevant within Te Ao Māori (the Māori world view). The six values are – Tohutanga (capability and development), Rangatiratanga (self-determination and upholding the integrity of others), Kaitiakitanga (stewardship and enhancing resources), Manaakitanga (hospitality, health and safety and wellbeing of self and others), and Whanaungatanga (kinship and communication). The exhibition is also positioned within He Tātaitanga Kaupapa āhua toi; a Māori art continuum (Jahnke 2006), using the classes of customary, non- customary and trans-customary art. How this body of work aligns with the categories of non-customary and trans-customary is also discussed.

MIHI:

Ko Aoraki, raua ko Makeo kā Mauka
Ko Waitaki, raua ko Waiaua kā Awa
Ko Takitimu, raua ko Mataatua kā Waka
Ko Waihao, ko Puketeraki, ko Roimata, ko Waiaua kā marae
Ko Kāi Tahu, raua ko Te Whakatōhea kā iwi
Ko Jane Wilson tōku Hākui
Ko Mervyn Wilson tōku Hākoro
Ko Steven Wilson, ko Billy McPherson ōku tukāne
Ko Janelle Wilson tāku ikoa
Nō Timaru ahau
Nō reira, tēna koutou, tēna koutou, tēna koutou katoa

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